

The Sacred Mitzvah of Burial

By Sandra Goldman, director, Hebrew Cemetery Association

A couple of months ago, I attended the showing of "In Heaven, Underground" at the Charlotte Jewish Film Festival. The documentary about Berlin's Weissensee, a 130-year-old Jewish cemetery, touched me profoundly. Its 115,000 graves make it the largest such establishment still in use in Europe. The place is beautiful, a secluded forest with uneven, obscured rows of dignified stone markers.

A more convincing picture of a cemetery's dreamy calm would be hard to find. However, the film begins with 84-year-old Rabbi William Wolff describing one of his primary tasks: "You only have one function at a funeral, to make sure that the coffin is put into its grave. That is the main duty."

I was shocked by his words, and could not disagree more. Burying someone is not a function. Rather, it is the biggest Mitzvah one can perform because dead people cannot express thanks. I appreciate learning about the life and legacy of each person who passes. Since I have become director at our cemetery, I have attended and worked with families to plan burials for close to 120 people.

Cemeteries are sacred spaces laden with symbolic meanings and communal values. Permeated with the transcendent, the cemetery is the place where the encounter between the living and the



Progress is being made in the construction of the new Memorial Building at the Hebrew Cemetery.

dead is socially organized and culturally regulated in the framework of our tradition. At its core, the cemetery serves to memorialize the dead.

This is why after years of planning the Cemetery Board and many generous donors have connected the dots to create what has been missing on these holy grounds: a Memorial Building. As it is taking shape, I invite you to come and visit the cemetery. Visit the oldest graves dated in the late eighteen hundreds and see how the new memorial building has evolved from the drawing board to the structure already erected on these sacred grounds. It is impressive.

In the future, memorial services of up to 60 visitors can be held inside the Mindy Ellen Levine Chapel, new home to the former Beth El ark. No longer will families have to endure heat, cold or wet weather during a service. Instead, everybody can congregate in the air-conditioned building, which will provide modern bathrooms. The grieving family can find comfort inside the Berlin



Family Room before the service, and after interment, those attending can gather for a catered event in the Gorelick Gathering Room.

The Memorial Building will last for centuries to come. It is no more a dream or an empty shell; brick and mortar are making it a reality. We have been very fortunate to be able to secure most dollars needed to erect this building, but in order to complete this project, we need you. We are asking the community at large to step up and help us over the finish line. Every dollar counts, and your support will give our cemetery even more heart and soul.

In the documentary, Rabbi Wolff of Weissensee says, "The next world is vague because we live in this world." Because we honor and celebrate our loved ones, we need to embrace our responsibility towards each other today. As the oldest and most established Charlotte Jewish institution, the Hebrew Cemetery continues to serve our community and welcomes your visits, your membership and your support.

To learn more about the new

Memorial Building, pre-planning or how to include the Hebrew Cemetery in your Jewish legacy, please contact Sandra Goldman by phone at 704-576-1859 or by email at director@hebrewcemetery.org. ☆



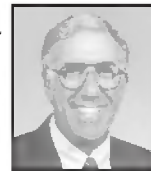
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Levine JCC's Distinctive Member Reception

This year's Distinctive Member Reception on April 25 was graciously hosted by and held at the magnificent home of Larry Schwartz, Past President of the Levine JCC Board of Directors and currently a Grand Benefactor as well. Distinctive Members and Levine JCC Legacy Gift Givers were invited to this special event to honor their generosity and to thank them for their ongoing commitment to our community.

The evening began with everyone enjoying hors d'oeuvres and wine selections by Porcupine Provisions. Guests meandered through Larry's beautiful home peppered with art work from around the world or sat poolside to chat and get to know each other.



Phil Warshauer, Elaine Moody, unknown attendee, and Larry Schwartz.



Susanna Goldberg and Amy Vitner



Annie and Harrison Lord, and Jaime Kosofsky



David Van Glish, Phil Berman, and Mark Perlin.

After Phil Berman, Chief Executive Officer, warmly welcomed all the guests, David Van Glish, President, took a few minutes to speak to all of those in attendance. David spoke of the Distinctive Member Program and its impact. He discussed our responsibility to provide for those of us in our community who are less fortunate through scholarships for both membership and camp, as well as to support our Senior and Social Action programming. David also reminded us of our commitment to provide for the next generation through the Levine JCC Legacy Gift initiative. Participation in

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